"Seamless Biking Experience": Culver Boulevard South Shoulder, Jefferson Boulevard to Nicholson Street, Playa del Rey, CA

Version 3.0

Policy Context

In Council File 25-1493, presented December 12, 2025, Councilwoman Traci Park committed to "creating a seamless biking experience between Playa Vista and Playa del Rey" by deploying K-rail along the south shoulder of Jefferson Boulevard between Culver and Lincoln Boulevards. [8] The motion acknowledges that existing bollards on Jefferson east of Culver are "supplemented by bollards along Culver Boulevard as it enters Playa del Rey," treating the two segments as elements of a continuous system. [8] Independently, the City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035 — adopted as an element of the General Plan and predating CF 25-1493 by a decade — designates Culver Boulevard through this segment as a Tier 2 Bicycle Lane in the Bicycle Lane Network (BLN), as confirmed by the NavigateLA mapping system maintained by the Bureau of Engineering, Department of Public Works. [10] No bike lane exists on this segment today. The gap between the City's own General Plan designation and the physical condition of the corridor is a matter of official record.

The south shoulder of Culver Boulevard between Jefferson Boulevard and Nicholson Street is the only direct south-side shoulder connection between the western terminus of Park's proposed Jefferson bike lane and the beach path network. The Ballona Wetlands (Area B) occupy the entire southern margin and Culver Boulevard motor vehicle lanes occupy the northern margin; cyclists using this corridor must either ride in mixed traffic lanes or use this substandard shoulder. Because no separate return path exists, cyclists traveling in both directions are channeled onto this single shoulder segment, making two-way use reasonably foreseeable. Two-way bicycle movement is inconsistent with a Class II bike lane, which by definition is one-directional and runs with traffic. For a separated two-way bikeway parallel to a roadway, Caltrans and AASHTO use a Class I shared-use path as the applicable design framework. Caltrans and AASHTO design guidance for Class I shared-use paths establishes minimum paved widths of 8 feet (Caltrans Highway Design Manual; 12 feet preferred) and 10 feet (AASHTO), with 2-foot graded shoulders, continuous pavement, and adequate lateral clearance throughout.

Engineering Assessment

Site photographs and field review indicate that along the south side of Culver Boulevard between Jefferson Boulevard and Nicholson Street, the area between the through-traffic lane bollards and the Wetland Area B brush narrows to approximately 3 feet in width (as estimated from field observation and confirmed by scaled aerial imagery) and consists in substantial part of unpaved sand and dirt rather than continuous hard pavement. Because two-way bicycle use of this shoulder is reasonably foreseeable, the applicable design benchmarks are those for a Class I shared-use path, which Caltrans and AASHTO use as the design framework for separated two-way bikeways along roadways. Measured against those benchmarks, the existing condition falls short on every applicable criterion: the surface is not continuously paved; the approximately 3-foot width falls short of the Caltrans minimum of 8 feet by approximately 5 feet and short of the AASHTO minimum of 10 feet by approximately 7 feet; the effective operating width is further reduced by lateral encroachments from bollards and vegetation to clearances below the 1.5-to-2-foot shy distance guidance in AASHTO; and the condition is discontinuous. The existing condition does not approach Class I benchmarks under any recognized authority, before accounting for the required 2-foot graded shoulders, intersection treatments, or surface quality requirements.

This segment is not a designated bike path or bike lane. (For purposes of this report, "de facto bicycle path" describes the way the shoulder is used and perceived by cyclists; it is not a claim that the City has formally designated it as a bikeway.) It nonetheless functions as a de facto bicycle path, a trap condition in which the physical configuration visually and operationally invites bicycle use while failing to provide minimum pavement width, surface continuity, or transition design. Field observation confirms that this shoulder is used not only by cyclists but also by pedestrians, e-bike riders, and unhoused individuals for whom it functions as the sole practical walking route connecting Playa del Rey to the surrounding area. Each of these user groups is independently exposed to the deficiencies described above; pedestrians in particular have no lawful lane rights on the adjacent roadway and no alternative path given the Ballona Wetlands constraint to the south. E-bike speeds compress the reaction time available at the Nicholson termination point and increase collision severity relative to conventional bicycle speeds. The presence of unhoused individuals, a population with limited ability to anticipate or respond to an abrupt termination hazard, further documents the range of vulnerable users foreseeably exposed to this condition.

Operationally, cyclists will experience this as a continuous separated space that behaves like a lane; its abrupt end, without taper, pavement markings, or advance warning, contravenes MUTCD Section 9C.04 guidance for bike lane terminations at right-turn lanes, which requires bicycle lane markings to stop at least 100 feet before a right-turn lane begins, with advance warning signs (Bicycle Lane Ends, W9-5; Bicycles Merging, W9-5a) alerting cyclists to the merge condition, none of which are present. Vehicles descending Nicholson Street and turning right onto Culver Boulevard are channeled into a mandatory right-turn-only lane that crosses the

south shoulder at precisely the point where the de facto path ends without warning. Once a vehicle enters that mandatory turn lane, the driver has no option to abort; the crossing of the shoulder is geometrically compelled. A cyclist reaching the shoulder terminus and a vehicle committed to the mandatory Nicholson right turn are therefore placed in a geometrically guaranteed conflict at the same point simultaneously, with no advance warning to either party. This is not merely a foreseeable hazard: it is a designed conflict, a known collision mechanism identified in AASHTO and FHWA safety literature, and the most acute defect in the present configuration.

Google Earth aerial imagery of the Nicholson Street intersection looking northeast toward Jefferson Boulevard independently confirms the geographic and physical conditions described above. [9] The imagery shows: (a) Ballona Wetlands Area B occupying the entire southern margin with no alternate path available; (b) the south-side shoulder visibly narrow and unpaved relative to the paved roadway surface, consistent with the approximately 3-foot partially unpaved condition documented in field review; (c) dense brush and tree canopy directly abutting the road edge, confirming encroachment conditions that reduce effective operating width below AASHTO shy distance minimums; and (d) the shoulder treatment terminating abruptly at the Nicholson Street intersection apron without taper, transition markings, or continuation. Notably, no protective bollards are visible along the south side of Culver in this segment, in contrast to the bollard treatment CF 25-1493 acknowledges on adjacent sections - confirming that this critical connecting segment lacks even the minimal protection present elsewhere in the system. [8, 9]

Notice and §835 Analysis

The City of Los Angeles has documented prior experience with severe traffic-safety outcomes in the Playa del Rey coastal project area. The 2015 fatal collision involving 16-year-old Naomi Larsen while crossing Vista Del Mar near Dockweiler State Beach - a separate but adjacent roadway within the same CD11 coastal safety project area - together with the resulting $9.5 million wrongful-death settlement approved unanimously by the Los Angeles City Council, was among the factors that precipitated the 2017 "Safe Streets for Playa del Rey" Road Diet and safety improvements that expressly included this Culver Boulevard corridor. [1, 2, 3] That Road Diet and its associated bike lanes and paths were subsequently removed following litigation by Keep LA Moving - a group that challenged the Road Diet on CEQA procedural grounds - after a heated neighborhood council meeting. [1, 7] The removal was not the product of an engineering determination that the corridor was safe for cyclists, as Keep LA Moving continued to pursue litigation and political pressure aimed at restoring and *expanding* motor-vehicle capacity after the bike lanes were eliminated. [7]

The removal of those bike lanes and paths did not resolve the safety hazard. In 2021, Wendy Galdamez Palma, 33, a mother carrying her 3-year-old child, was killed in a hit-and-run while

crossing Vista Del Mar near Dockweiler State Beach - within the same CD11 coastal project area - during the period after bike lanes had been stripped from the adjacent Pershing Drive corridor. [7] Separately, the January 31, 2026 death of Regan Cole-Graham on Pershing Drive in Playa del Rey, in the vicinity of Manchester Avenue - where she was struck along with her family while cycling on a segment where bike lanes installed as part of the 2017 Safe Streets project had previously been removed, and whose unborn daughter Ophelia also died in the collision - further documents the ongoing and unresolved safety risk on this corridor. [4, 5, 6, 7] The Cole-Graham collision occurred on a stretch of road where bike lanes installed as part of the same 2017 Safe Streets project had subsequently been removed following the Keep LA Moving litigation. [1, 4, 7]

The pattern of documented fatalities in the Playa del Rey coastal project area - 2015 (Larsen on Vista Del Mar), 2021 (Galdamez Palma on Vista Del Mar near Dockweiler), and 2026 (Cole-Graham and Ophelia Graham on Pershing Drive) - spanning the period before, during, and after the City's brief installation and removal of bicycle infrastructure as part of the 2017 Safe Streets for Playa del Rey project, establishes that City officials had, at minimum, general project-area awareness of significant and continuing safety risks affecting pedestrians and cyclists in this CD11 coastal corridor. That awareness constitutes contextual evidence of corridor-level safety risk, which may inform - but does not independently establish - the constructive notice element of California Government Code §835 as applied to the present Culver Boulevard segment, which shares the same corridor, the same project history, and similar patterns of non-continuous or removed bike lane and path design.

CF 25-1493 provides an independent and direct basis for notice. The motion's own language characterizes Jefferson and Culver as linked corridors for cyclist protection, which supports treating the Culver connector as part of the same functional bikeway context, even though the motion's funding direction is limited to Jefferson. To deliver the promised seamless bike connection from Playa Vista to Playa del Rey, some safe, continuous linkage from Jefferson's western end to the beach path is necessary. In the absence of any other defined alignment, the Culver south shoulder between Jefferson and Nicholson currently functions as that link, placing City officials on notice that its substandard condition affects the safety of the very users the motion aims to protect. [8]

In light of that notice, the combination of non-designated status as a bike path or bike lane, substandard and partially unpaved surface, encroachment of bollards and vegetation reducing effective operating width below AASHTO shy distance minimums, abrupt termination without required transition design, and functional incompatibility with the Class I shared-use path design that would be expected if the City's policy commitment were implemented as a separated two-way bikeway creates a reasonably foreseeable risk of serious harm to cyclists using this roadway with due care. Absent geometric correction or provision of a clearly delineated, continuous, two-way shared-use path designed in accordance with accepted engineering practice, the present configuration could reasonably be argued to constitute a dangerous condition of public property under §835.

Culver Boulevard South Shoulder: Remediation Alternatives

Five alternatives are available. They are presented here to support Council District 11 in identifying the most appropriate response.

Alternative 1: Minimum Interim Treatment. Install advance warning signs (Bicycle Lane Ends, W9-5; Bicycles Merging, W9-5a), a taper, and transition markings at the Nicholson Street terminus, as required by MUTCD Section 9C.04. Addresses the most acute defect immediately. Under existing LADOT authority. Minimal cost. Weeks to implement.

Alternative 2: Close the Shoulder. Install physical barriers to prevent use of the south shoulder. Eliminates the Nicholson conflict geometry but displaces users into mixed traffic. Contradicts the "seamless biking experience" commitment of CF 25-1493. Not recommended without a concurrent alternative facility.

Alternative 3: Reinstate the 2017 Road Diet. Restore the bicycle lanes and road diet configuration installed under the 2017 "Safe Streets for Playa del Rey" project. This corridor operated successfully under that geometry. Removal was the result of a CEQA procedural challenge, not an engineering safety determination. Requires CEQA compliance. The most directly implementable permanent fix and the option most consistent with CF 25-1493.

Alternative 4: Class I Shared-Use Path Along the Area B Edge. A 12-foot paved shared-use path along the Culver Boulevard road edge within Ballona Wetlands Area B. Fully resolves every deficiency identified above and delivers the "seamless biking experience" in separated, protected form. CDFW is currently required under court order to produce a revised EIR for the Ballona Wetlands restoration project. Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(1), that rEIR must analyze a No Project Alternative documenting the Area B baseline, including the Culver road edge. A formal CD11 comment requesting analysis of a path easement along that edge places this alternative on the administrative record at no additional environmental review cost.

Alternative 5: Do Nothing. Maintaining the current configuration after these deficiencies have been specifically identified and transmitted to the Council office is the highest-risk option from a liability standpoint.

Notes and Sources

[1] KCRW, "Responding to the rage at a road diet story," August 30, 2017. https://www.kcrw.com/shows/design-and-architecture/stories/responding-to-the-rage-at-a-road-diet-story

[2] Los Angeles Times, "L.A. agrees to pay $9.5 million in wrongful death case," April 19, 2017. https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-wrongful-death-settlement-dockweiler-20170419-story.html

[3] KTLA, "$9.5 Million Settlement Awarded in Death of Teen Killed at Dark Intersection by Dockweiler Beach," April 20, 2017. http://ktla.com/2017/04/20/9-5-million-settlement-awarded-in-death-of-15-year-old-killed-at-dark-intersection-by-dockweiler-beach/

[4] BikinginLA, "36-year-old woman and unborn baby killed riding ebike on Pershing Drive in Playa del Rey, where bike lanes removed in 2017," February 2 & 6, 2026. https://bikinginla.com/2026/02/02/36-year-old-woman-and-unborn-baby-killed-riding-ebike-on-pershing-drive-in-playa-del-rey-where-bike-lanes-removed-in-2017/

[5] CBS Los Angeles, "Pregnant bicyclist dies in Playa del Rey crash while riding with her children and husband," February 4, 2026. https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/pregnant-bicyclist-regan-cole-graham-killed-playa-del-rey-crash-los-angeles/

[6] KTLA, "Ghost bike memorial planned for pregnant cyclist killed in Playa del Rey crash," February 27, 2026 (citing Los Angeles Times reporting). https://ktla.com/news/local-news/ghost-bike-memorial-planned-for-pregnant-cyclist-killed-in-playa-del-rey-crash/

[7] CSULA University Times, "Ride for mother and daughter on street stripped of bike lanes draws supporters," March 13, 2026. https://csulauniversitytimes.com/ride-for-mother-and-daughter-on-street-stripped-of-bike-lanes-draws-supporters/

[8] Los Angeles City Council, Council File 25-1493, Motion presented by Councilwoman Traci Park, 11th District, December 12, 2025. "Jefferson Blvd K-Rail." Authorizing LADOT to appropriate up to $175,000 within Coastal Transportation Corridor Trust Fund No. 447 for deployment of 1,400 linear feet of K-rail on Jefferson Boulevard west of Lincoln Boulevard.

[9] Google Earth aerial image, Culver Boulevard at Nicholson Street, Playa del Rey, CA, looking northeast toward Jefferson Boulevard. File: Nicholson_Toward_Jefferson_March_31_2026.jpg.

[10] NavigateLA, Bureau of Engineering, Department of Public Works, City of Los Angeles. Mobility Plan 2035 - Bicycle Lane Network (BLN): Culver Boulevard designated Tier 2 Bicycle Lane. Datasource: Department of City Planning. Accessed April 2, 2026. File: NavigateLA_Culver_Boulevard_Tier_2_Bicycle_Lane_2026-04-02.jpg.